



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 13 December 1967



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DAILY BRIEF

13 DECEMBER 1967

1. Cyprus

Rival Cypriot fighting units still confront each other in several tense areas on the island as Makarios' effort to arrange reciprocal withdrawals gets off to a slow start. Turkish Cypriots have initially balked at a limited withdrawal plan, but the real decision is up to Ankara. Ambassador Belcher points out that if this initial "normalization" effort falls through, it will cast doubt on the chances of a broader UN-sponsored pacification program.

The second major evacuation of Greek troops from Cyprus was set to get under way last night, but as yet we have no word on how it went.

2. Communist China

This year's grain harvest has probably been a good one, perhaps even a little better than in 1957--the year before Mao's disastrous Great Leap Forward. It will not do much to raise rations, however--there are almost 150 million more Chinese stomachs to fill now than there were a decade ago.

Also, there is good evidence that trans- 50X1
port problems will disrupt the collection and distribution of food. Unsettled conditions will also encourage peasants in many areas to hold back grain from government collectors.

Peking still needs foreign grains, and has just concluded a contract to buy two million tons of Canadian wheat for delivery next year. Negotiations are under way with France and probably will soon begin with Australia.

3. Yemen

Fighting continues north of the capital, but with no apparent decision.

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4. Arab States

The proposed Arab summit conference has been delayed until 17 January,

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We do not think that Brezhnev's long-scheduled visit to Cairo next month has anything to do with the postponement.

5. Ghana

Potentially dangerous frictions are developing within the military leadership as it casts about uncertainly for ways to achieve the promised restoration of civilian government. Public criticism is growing over the regime's policy of economic austerity and over the encouragement it has given to private foreign investment.

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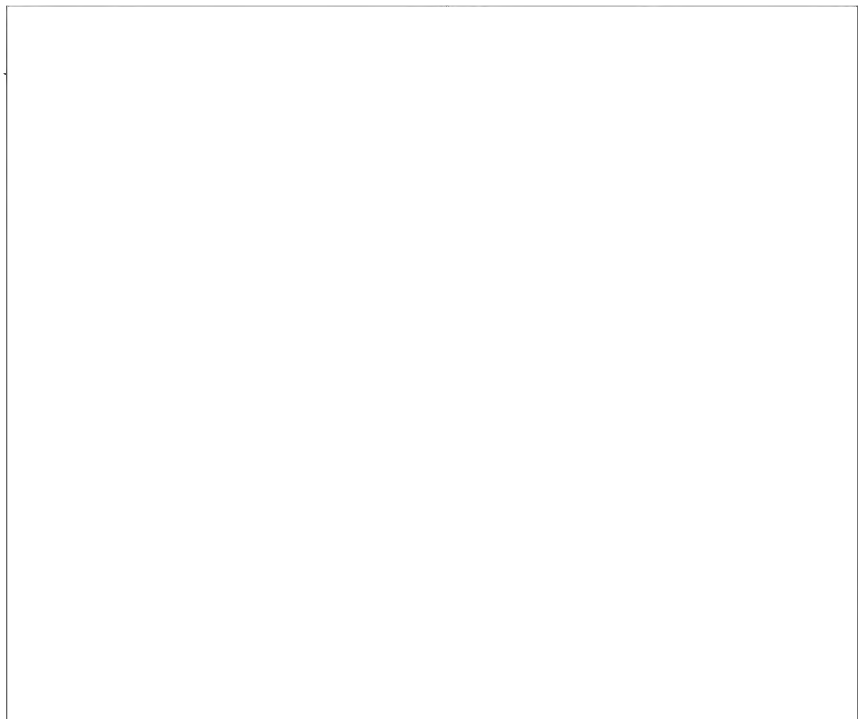
6. Laos

The Communists have kicked off their annual dry season offensive. In an area that had been relatively secure in the southern panhandle, a combined Pathet Lao - North Vietnamese force overran a neutralist base on Monday. The defenders suffered heavy losses before recapturing it yesterday. In the north a few days earlier, the Communists seized a base from which pro-government counterinsurgents had been staging operations against routes out of North Vietnam.

Reports of substantial supply movements in recent weeks suggest that the Communists may intend a more sustained offensive effort in northern Laos this season.

7. Soviet Union - West Germany

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

Special Daily Report on North Vietnam



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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Hanoi Comments on the UN: Hanoi has broken its silence regarding recent Vietnam related activities at the UN by issuing a sharply worded denunciation of US efforts to bring the Vietnam problem before the Security Council. This was the essence of an authoritative "Commentator" article in the party daily Nhan Dan, which was broadcast on 12 December.

"Commentator" claimed that the US was up to its "old tricks" of making the UN serve its "aggressive plan against Vietnam" and "scrapping the 1954 Geneva Agreements." It reiterated Hanoi's long-standing view that the "UN has no jurisdiction whatsoever to settle the Vietnam problem," and cited the Liberation Front's recent denial that it had tried to send representatives to the UN to discuss the Vietnam question.

Continuing on the same unyielding note, "Commentator" restated Hanoi's most rigid formulations for a settlement of the conflict. The article concluded by claiming that Hanoi's Four Points and the Front's new political program reflect the basic principles and main provisions of the 1954 Geneva Agreements, which, it said, "the countries participating in the Geneva conference, as well as other countries and the UN, have the duty to respect."

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Further From Spanish Refugees Out of North Vietnam: Seven Spanish veterans of the French Foreign Legion who remained in North Vietnam after the end of the Indochina war have recently been returned to Spain. Their repatriation is the latest result of Hanoi's efforts over the past three years to rid the country of foreign elements which the regime has felt to be untrustworthy. The refugees had spent most of the years since 1954 in villages outside Hanoi engaged in semiskilled and laboring tasks.

In an initial press statement, the refugees complained about their treatment at the hands of the North Vietnamese, stating that even after many years, they were considered foreigners. They claimed that the North Vietnamese were not afraid of the US and were determined to fight "until none of them is left standing."

Prior to their evacuation on 30 November, the refugees spent several weeks in Hanoi. In a report of their impressions of conditions there, they said that despite North Vietnamese government propaganda, bomb damage to Hanoi did not appear to be extensive and that the government was using "black smoke" to simulate damage. The refugees observed that traffic in Hanoi was flowing in both directions across the Doumer bridge, and that there appeared to be plenty of labor available for repairing bridges and other vital points. Such repairs seemed to be made effectively within a reasonable period of time. The Spaniards also observed numerous small generators in the capital and reported that electric power was available on some days but not on others.

In a subsequent report, the refugees provided more specific information on the conditions in the area where they had lived. All indicated that the food situation was bad. They complained about the inability to obtain milk, meat, and other commodities which are more common to a Westerner's diet than to an Oriental's. The supply of rice seemed adequate on the basis of the information given but it was clear from the refugees' statements that the people are hard pressed to make ends meet and to provide for themselves.

Several of the Spaniards confirmed earlier reports of black market activities in the outlying areas, claiming that needed foods, like rice and sugar, were priced greatly above that set by the government; prices went down, however, at harvest time. Others reported that some of the food they had received came from China or the Soviet Union. All left the impression that the people were unhappy and war weary, but none mentioned any antiregime sentiments or any open disobedience to regime dictates. One refugee pointed to the security apparatus as one reason for popular compliance with government dictates.

Comments on Haiphong Bombing: [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] the following undated--but clearly recent--report about conditions in Haiphong, which indicates that the port is functioning normally:

"Six or seven ships, that is the maximum possible, are permanently at the docks. The activities of loading and unloading seem to be regular.

"The Vietnamese have profited from the pause in the American attacks to repair their lines of communication. The time to travel between Hanoi and Haiphong remains as before, comprising between three and four hours; it cannot be shortened because of the ferries and pontoon bridges.

"On the economic side, there has been a return to the situation which existed several months ago, before the bombing which caused so much death and destruction while at the same time causing Americans to lose many planes and pilots."

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Conditions in Haiphong: [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] food and daily necessities such as soap, linens, cloth, toilet goods, and shoes had become increasingly scarce and had to be rationed. [REDACTED]

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the food situation had become a matter of serious concern. Many factories in the industrial sector of Haiphong had been either destroyed or heavily damaged during recent US bombing raids, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] this had put large numbers of people out of work, but [REDACTED] most of them had been mobilized into crews to assist in repairing bridges, roads, and rail lines.

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Interview with North Vietnamese Diplomat:
The Italian paper "La Nazione" reported an interview with Phan Van Su, North Vietnam's ambassador to Czechoslovakia, on 9 December. Phan reiterated Hanoi's standard position that only an "unconditional suspension" of bombing by the US can lead to talks and that Hanoi will not talk to the Saigon regime "because that government does not represent anything." The ambassador asserted that up to now Hanoi had had plenty of men to defeat the US, but in case of need, North Vietnam will turn to others and "all our socialist friends are ready to send us volunteers." China, Phan said, does not try to impose its will on Hanoi. The North Vietnamese listen to all advice, but, "in the last analysis, we decide."

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL
ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

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